



## Definitions for Institutional Research, Assessment, and Effectiveness

**GO FORTH** *inspired.*

## Definitions for Institutional Research, Assessment, and Effectiveness

### A

#### Accreditation

A process of external quality review by which an institution or program is evaluated against established standards to ensure it meets accepted levels of quality. Wiley University is accredited by SACSCOC.

*See also: SACSCOC, Compliance*

#### Action Plan

A documented set of specific steps a program will take in response to assessment findings, including responsible parties, timelines, and resource needs.

*See also: Closing the Loop, Continuous Improvement*

#### Assessment

The systematic process of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well students are achieving intended learning outcomes.

*See also: Direct Assessment, Indirect Assessment, Student Learning Outcome*

#### Assessment Cycle

The recurring four-phase process of planning, collecting data, analyzing results, and implementing improvements based on assessment findings.

*See also: Continuous Improvement*

#### Assessment Plan

A written document that specifies the student learning outcomes, assessment methods, benchmarks, data collection timeline, and responsible parties for a program.

*See also: Student Learning Outcome, Benchmark*

#### Attrition Rate

The percentage of students who leave an institution before completing their degree, calculated as the inverse of the retention rate.

*See also: Retention Rate*

### B

#### Benchmark

A standard or reference point against which assessment results are compared. Benchmarks may be internal targets, peer institution comparisons, or national averages.

*See also: Performance Indicator, KPI*

## Bloom's Taxonomy

A hierarchical framework for categorizing cognitive learning objectives into six levels: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create.

*See also: Student Learning Outcome*

## C

### Closing the Loop

The practice of using assessment results to make specific, documented improvements to programs, curricula, or services, and then reassessing to evaluate the impact of those changes.

*See also: Action Plan, Continuous Improvement*

### Cohort

A group of students who share a common characteristic, typically defined by their entry term (e.g., the Fall 2024 first-time, full-time cohort).

*See also: Retention Rate, Graduation Rate*

### Compliance

The state of meeting all requirements established by accrediting bodies, governmental agencies, and institutional policies.

*See also: Accreditation, SACSCOC*

### Continuous Improvement

An ongoing institutional commitment to evaluating and enhancing programs, services, and operations based on evidence and assessment data.

*See also: Closing the Loop, Assessment Cycle*

### Co-Curricular Assessment

The evaluation of student learning and development that occurs outside the traditional classroom, including student organizations, residence life, and service learning.

*See also: Assessment*

### Cross-Sectional Data

Data collected at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of a population at that moment rather than tracking changes over time.

*See also: Longitudinal Data*

### Curriculum Mapping

A process of aligning student learning outcomes with specific courses and learning experiences across a program to ensure comprehensive coverage.

*See also: Student Learning Outcome*

## D

**Dashboard**

An interactive, visual display of key performance indicators and institutional data that allows stakeholders to monitor trends and performance at a glance.

*See also: KPI, Data Disaggregation*

**Data Disaggregation**

The process of separating aggregated data into smaller subgroups (e.g., by race, gender, modality) to identify patterns, trends, and equity gaps.

*See also: Equity Gap*

**Direct Assessment**

An assessment method that requires students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, or abilities through observable performance, such as exams, portfolios, or rubric-scored work.

*See also: Indirect Assessment*

## E

**Enrollment Management**

The strategic coordination of activities related to student recruitment, admission, financial aid, retention, and graduation to achieve institutional enrollment goals.

*See also: Retention Rate*

**Equity Gap**

A statistically significant difference in outcomes (such as retention, graduation, or assessment performance) between demographic subgroups of students.

*See also: Data Disaggregation*

## F

**FERPA**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records and restricts the disclosure of personally identifiable information.

*See also: Compliance*

**First-Time Full-Time Student**

A student who enrolls at an institution for the first time as a degree-seeking student carrying a full-time course load, as defined by the institution.

*See also: Cohort, IPEDS*

## Formative Assessment

Assessment conducted during the learning process to provide ongoing feedback and enable instructional adjustments before a final evaluation.

*See also: Summative Assessment*

## G

### Graduation Rate

The percentage of students in a defined cohort who complete their degree within a specified time frame (typically 150% of normal program length for IPEDS reporting).

*See also: Cohort, Retention Rate, IPEDS*

## I

### Indirect Assessment

An assessment method that captures perceptions, opinions, or self-reports about learning, such as surveys, focus groups, or exit interviews, rather than directly measuring student performance.

*See also: Direct Assessment*

### Institutional Effectiveness

The systematic, ongoing process by which an institution evaluates and improves all aspects of its operations, programs, and services to fulfill its mission.

*See also: Continuous Improvement, Strategic Planning*

### Institutional Research

The function within a college or university responsible for collecting, analyzing, and reporting institutional data to support planning, policy development, accreditation, and decision-making.

*See also: Institutional Effectiveness*

### IPEDS

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, a federally mandated data collection system administered by NCES that requires all Title IV institutions to report enrollment, completion, financial, and human resources data.

*See also: Compliance, Graduation Rate*

### IRB

The Institutional Review Board, a committee that reviews and approves research involving human subjects to ensure ethical standards are met and participant rights are protected.

*See also: FERPA*

## K

## Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

A quantifiable measure used to evaluate the success of an institution, program, or process in achieving its strategic objectives.

*See also: Benchmark, Dashboard*

## L

### Learning Outcome

A specific, measurable statement describing what a student is expected to know, be able to do, or value as a result of a learning experience.

*See also: Student Learning Outcome, Assessment*

### Longitudinal Data

Data collected over multiple time points to track changes, trends, and patterns within a population over an extended period.

*See also: Cross-Sectional Data, Trend Analysis*

## M

### Mission Statement

A formal declaration of an institution's or program's core purpose, values, and fundamental goals that guides all planning, assessment, and decision-making activities.

*See also: Strategic Planning*

## N

### NSSE

The National Survey of Student Engagement, a widely used survey instrument that measures the extent to which students participate in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development.

*See also: Survey, Indirect Assessment*

## P

### Peer Institution

A college or university identified as comparable to Wiley University based on characteristics such as size, mission, demographics, and Carnegie classification, used for benchmarking purposes.

*See also: Benchmark*

### Performance Indicator

A specific, measurable data point used to monitor progress toward institutional or program goals.

*See also: KPI, Benchmark*

### Program Review

A comprehensive, periodic evaluation of an academic program that examines its mission, outcomes, curriculum, resources, and effectiveness to inform improvement and resource allocation decisions.

*See also: Continuous Improvement*

## Q

### Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

A component of SACSCOC reaffirmation that requires institutions to develop and implement a focused plan to improve specific student learning outcomes or the learning environment.

*See also: SACSCOC, Accreditation*

### Qualitative Data

Non-numerical data collected through methods such as interviews, open-ended surveys, focus groups, and observations that provide rich, contextual understanding.

*See also: Quantitative Data*

### Quantitative Data

Numerical data that can be measured, counted, and analyzed using statistical methods to identify patterns, trends, and relationships.

*See also: Qualitative Data*

## R

### Retention Rate

The percentage of students in a defined cohort who return to the institution for a subsequent enrollment period, most commonly measured from fall to fall for first-time, full-time students.

*See also: Cohort, Graduation Rate, Attrition Rate*

### Rubric

A scoring guide that defines performance expectations along a scale with clearly described criteria at each level, used to evaluate student work consistently and transparently.

*See also: Direct Assessment*

## S

## SACSCOC

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, the regional accrediting body for degree-granting institutions in the southern United States. Wiley University holds SACSCOC accreditation.

*See also: Accreditation, Compliance*

## Strategic Planning

The process by which an institution defines its long-term direction, establishes goals and priorities, and allocates resources to achieve its mission and vision.

*See also: Mission Statement, Institutional Effectiveness*

## Student Learning Outcome (SLO)

A clear, measurable statement describing what students are expected to know, be able to do, or value upon successful completion of a program of study.

*See also: Assessment, Bloom's Taxonomy, Learning Outcome*

## Substantive Change

A significant modification or expansion of an institution's programs, operations, or structure that must be reported to and approved by SACSCOC prior to implementation.

*See also: SACSCOC, Compliance*

## Summative Assessment

Assessment conducted at the conclusion of a learning experience to evaluate overall student achievement against established outcomes and benchmarks.

*See also: Formative Assessment*

## T

## Trend Analysis

The examination of data collected over multiple time periods to identify patterns, changes, and trajectories in institutional performance or student outcomes.

*See also: Longitudinal Data*